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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MO](#)
SUBJECT: NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS CALL FOR A BOYCOTT
OF THE US--GLORIFY HIZBALLAH

REF: CASABLANCA 01233

Classified By: Political Counselor Craig Karp, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: A wave of agitation has given new life to an existing "boycott" of cooperation with the US, and has now become linked to the glorification of Hizballah. Six nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have pledged to boycott all programs and activities of the Mission. The largest, the Moroccan Association for Human Rights (AMDH) has boycotted cooperation with the US since 2003. The six NGOs are now circulating a petition to other NGOs asking them to join the boycott and to pledge to report on their members if they participate in US functions or programs. The NGOs gathered at a well-attended rally November 2, called by Khalid Sufyani, the Moroccan head of the Pan-Arab Conference Organization based in Beirut. The rally sharply criticized US policy in the Middle East linking it to Israel and its assault on Lebanon. Hizballah was widely praised at the rally, part of an extensively reported trend glorifying the Lebanese Shia movement for its defiance of Israel. A number of Islamist political leaders were in attendance, including the head of the major Islamist party, the Justice and Development Party (PJD), which could capture the largest number of parliamentary seats of any single party in the 2007 parliamentary elections. The Justice and Charity Organization (JCO) was also represented at the rally.. So far the boycott has had limited practical significance; however, in the unlikely event the tattle-tale provision were implemented, it could have a chilling affect on our outreach efforts. End Summary.

¶2. (U) The press reported an October 31 meeting in which six Moroccan NGOs pledged to boycott all activities and programs organized by the USG in Morocco. The six NGOs are: the Moroccan Association for Human Rights (AMDH), which has significant influence in Morocco with an estimated 8000 members, the Moroccan Press Union (MPU), the Moroccan Union of Writers (MUW), the Moroccan Association for the Support of the Palestinian Struggle (MASPS), the Moroccan Association for the Support of Palestine and Iraq (MASPI), and the Moroccan Coalition for Art and Culture (MCAC). Younes M'jahed, the secretary-general of the MPU, reportedly referring to the activities and programs related to the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) told the press: "the pre-emptive war led by America in Iraq under the pretext of spreading democracy and human rights in the world is a joke."

¶3. (C) A member of the MPU, Hassan Bakkali, informed

Emboffs that the boycott would extend to US organizations and/or foundations, specifically the International Republican Institute (IRI) and the National Democratic Institute (NDI). Bakkali said that a petition will be distributed to all Moroccan NGOs calling on them to take the same position to denounce the continuous "American presence in Iraq and its double standard policy in the Middle East." In addition, he indicated that NGO members will be reported to their organizations if they participate in US functions and programs.

14. (C) Since 2003 when the Iraq war began, the AMDH has consistently boycotted US programs. The MASPS and the MCAC, headed by Khalid Sufyani, who is the head of the Pan-Arab Conference Organization based in Beirut, often join with other organizations, including the AMDH and the Justice and Development Party (PJD), to demonstrate against the GOM or US actions in the Near East. During the recent war in Lebanon, several NGOs demonstrated against Israel and the US in Rabat and Casablanca. Recently, during Ramadan, the AMDH organized a demonstration in Casablanca against the rise in commodity prices (reftel). With 8,000 members nationwide, the AMDH is the largest NGO in Morocco and has more registered members than any of the political parties including the PJD. While the JCO, which is neither a political party nor a NGO, claims the largest membership, its actual numbers are unknown.

15. (C) During the evening of November 2, the MASPI organized a rally at the Mohamed V theater in Rabat to commemorate the "historical victory" of Hizballah in Lebanon. According to Pol LES, who attended the event, hundreds of Moroccan university students shouted anti-American and anti-Israeli slogans, e.g., "We are here to defend our liberty and our true sovereignty, the sovereignty of the resistance." Some of the banners said: "No to

American-Zionist intervention. Yes to resistance." The crowd appeared to be larger than at other recent rallies held in Rabat. Present were: PJD president Saad Eddine El Othmani; Mohamed Hamdaoui, leader of the Reform and Unification Party; and, Abdelwahed Moutawakil, the "political circle" leader, and Fathallah Arsalane of the JCO. Sufyani praised Hizballah's Hassan Nasrallah and described him as "a very courageous Arab and Muslim leader who fought for the dignity of the Muslim nation." He added: "Today, we celebrate the historical victory not only of the Lebanese but of the whole Umma against the joint American and Zionist arrogance." This was the most public manifestation of a broader trend noted in the media glorifying Hizballah, which reportedly has become a "hero" to many Moroccans.

16. (C) Comment: The principal substantive change is the addition of one small NGO to the boycott, which so far has had a relatively minimal impact. No additional NGOs signed the petition during the rally. The incident and the importance of the petition may be political posturing on the part of AMDH in particular. Some interlocutors have suggested that this week's US elections are driving both the petition and the rally. Some interlocutors have opined that this was domestic jockeying for the most anti-American position in preparation for the 2007 elections, seeing it as a sure-fire way to win votes. What is even more troubling for US interest in the region, however, is the putative alliance between these two elements, as witnessed by both sides being at the November 2 rally. Another possible motivation may be that the NGOs, particularly AMDH are using their criticism of the US as a surrogate for criticizing the Monarchy, a tactic historically not unknown in the multi-layered onion of Moroccan politics. End Comment.

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